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SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
Washington

October 17, 1950

Dear General Smith:

Reference is made to General Irwin's memorandum of July 20, 1950, and to Admiral Hillenkoetter's memorandum of August 16, 1950, both concerning a Central Registry of Personality Files on Individuals of Intelligence and Security Interest, copies of which were forwarded to the Department for comment. I have delayed answering these communications because their arrival coincided with several proposals on the same general subject which we were in the process of preparing and which it seemed appropriate to include in my reply.

At present there are several problems in the field of personality intelligence which warrant study. The Department of the Army has outlined one; there are a number of others. Accordingly, I suggest that it may now be time for another general study similar to that made by an interdepartmental committee in 1946, which would examine the needs and gaps in the field of personality intelligence, would determine the capabilities and responsibilities of each agency and would undertake any corrective measures that may be required.

Since the lapse of CIG Directive No. 16, originally issued on November 1, 1946, to define the biographic intelligence activities of the agencies concerned, responsibility for personality intelligence has had to be determined by inference from the NSCIDs. A logical point of departure for a survey, therefore, might well be a review, in the light of subsequent experience, of CIG Directive No. 16 in order to determine the desirability of issuing an NSCID on this subject. Problems which would arise during the course of this survey and which I believe warrant study by the agencies concerned include the following:

1. The current decentralization and the gaps in information on foreign nationals that exist in some of the intelligence agencies, factors which make it difficult if not impossible -- as pointed out by the Department of the Army -- to conduct effective and prompt name checks and to have immediately available as needed personality information.

2. The desirability of Central registries in each agency reflecting and controlling information available to that agency or

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a completely central registry in one agency representing name information in all intelligence agencies.

3. Review of the activities of each intelligence agency in the biographic field to determine whether each is ensuring complete coverage of those categories of personalities in which it has primary responsibility and whether each is prepared to provide such information promptly to other agencies requesting it.

4. Coordination in the collecting and reporting of biographic intelligence at foreign posts.

5. Coordination in the organization of biographic intelligence and "security personality intelligence." Past efforts to systematize the activities of the intelligence agencies in these two fields have followed the practice of separating them into two distinct problems. As the Department of the Army's memorandum suggests these problems are related and experience has shown that the two activities require considerable coordination.

6. The acquisition of personality intelligence on foreign nationals and groups in the U.S. Once again, as the Department of the Army suggests and as we have also experienced, there appears to be a serious gap in the collection and reporting of information on such groups required for foreign intelligence purposes. Any general survey into the subject of personality intelligence cannot be complete unless it considers this problem and attempts to co-ordinate it with other aspects of foreign personality intelligence.

As I have suggested above, the foregoing represent some of the more important problems now existing in the field of personality intelligence. The momentum gained during the 1946 biographic survey appears to me to have stopped, and I feel there is need to review the entire field of personality information in the light of experience and developments since that time. Accordingly, I join in the Department of the Army's recommendation for a survey and in addition, recommend that this survey be broadened to include other important aspects of the problem. If there is a general agreement with this view, I shall be glad to outline the subjects above in more detail.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ W. Park Armstrong, Jr.

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